

by Doug Moench, Dan Day and Nestor Redondo!

ECLIPSE
COMICS

\$2.50 in USA
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AZTEC XICIE



YOU MET HIM FIRST IN THE PAGES OF

DNAGENTSTM

NOW, HE'S OUT ON HIS OWN... BATTLING THE MOST
INCREDIBLE FOES IN THE MOST UNBELIEVABLE WORLD
EVER SEEN IN A COMIC BOOK: THE REALITY OF
HOLLYWOOD (WHAT LITTLE THERE IS). YOU'VE
NEVER READ ANYTHING QUITE LIKE IT; THERE'S
NEVER BEEN A HERO QUITE LIKE...

CROSSFIRETM

by MARK EVANIER and DAN SPIEGLE
CREATED BY MARK EVANIER AND WILL MEUGNIOT





IT'S THE
MIDNIGHT
HOUR, ACE...

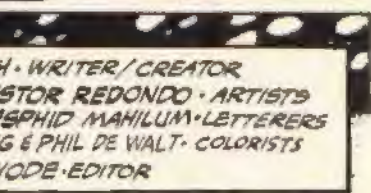
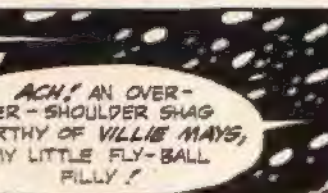
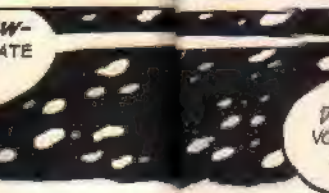
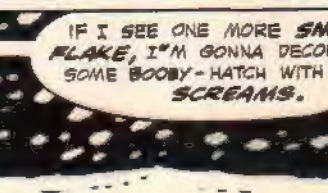
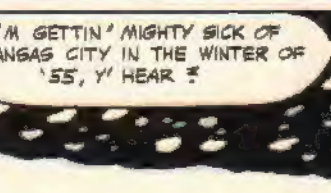
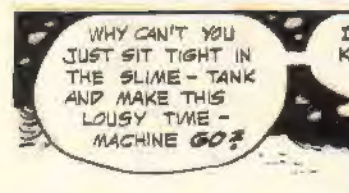
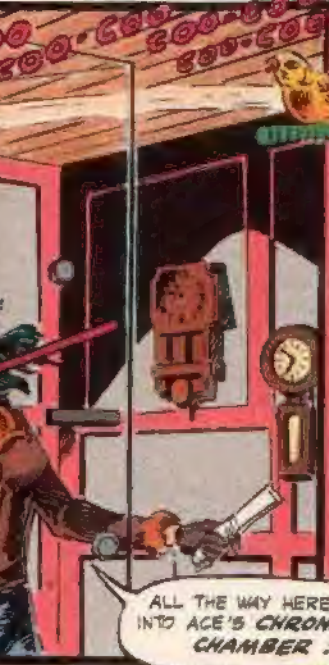
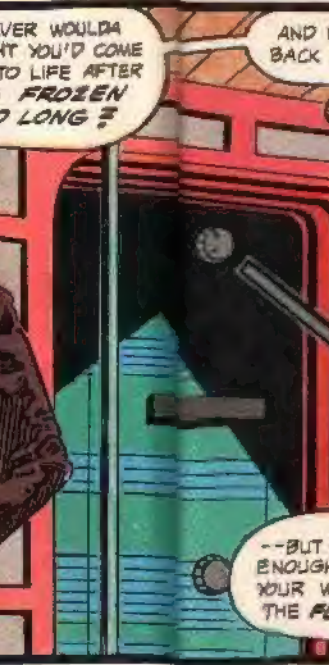
NOT BY
MY CLOCK,
POPS.

NEVER SAY
DIAL, EH?

NOT
WHILE THEY
ALL SHOW A
DIFFERENT
DEADLINE.

... A CERTAIN DESOLATE AREA OF LAND... A VALLEY OF ASHES...
A FANTASTIC FARM WHERE ASHES GREW LIKE WHEAT INTO
RIDGES AND HILLS AND GROTESQUE GARDENS. --- F. SCOTT
FITZGERALD'S DESCRIPTION OF FLUSHING, QUEENS, FUTURE/PAST
SITE OF THE 1939-40 NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR.

"TIME IS A
CIRCUS ALWAYS
PACKING UP AND
MOVING AWAY."
--- BEN HECHT



MEANWHILE: TIME'S MAN OF THE YEARS

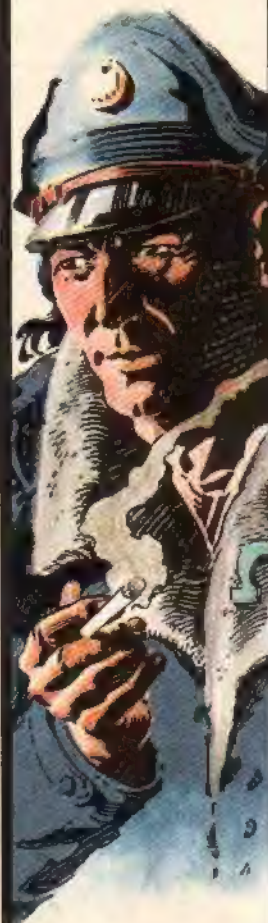
IF THE GOLDEN MELD IS THE TIME-SCAPE OF INFINITY (AND IT IS), WHEN IN ALL ITS VAST TEMPOGRAPHY WILL I FIND THE MOMENTARY ROUTE TO BRIDGET AND HEAD?

WHERE WILL I FIND THE TIME TO REACH HER ARMS, HIS BRAIN?



ALL OF TIME IS MINE, YET I'M CONFINED TO A MERE LIFETIME MINUS 27 SPENT YEARS.

I AM LIKE A MAN POSSESSED OF SO MUCH WEALTH THAT THE MERE COUNTING OF IT WOULD CONSUME MORE THAN THE NUMBER OF HIS DAYS.



I HAVE THE MEANS TO FIND BRIDGET, IN THIS STOLEN EBONATI SHIFT-VEHICLE YET THE ACT OF FINDING HER IS LESS THAN FUTILE.

SHE IS A SMALL GLIM NEEDLE TUCKED SOMEWHERE IN AN INFINITY OF TIMESTACKS.



I DESPERATELY NEED A SHORT-CUT.

HARDLY A FAIR WORLD

THAT'S THE LAST OF THE SLUG-SLIME, HEAD--FULLY THAWED AND SCRAPED BACK INTO THE FUEL-TANK.

GIVING US AN EFFECTIVE RANGE OF SOME SIXTEEN YEARS, MY MELANCHOLY MAIDEN--



--OUR OPTION SPANNING FROM 1939 TO 1971--THIRTY-TWO SUMMERS FOR YOUR SELECTION.

I'D PREFER TO GO BACK, TEMPUS, TO THE LIMIT... TO A TIME WHEN I KNOW I WAS... ALIVE.



REVERSE IT IS, MY BUXOM BEAUCOUPS--

--AND FOR YOUR SIGHTSEEING ENJOYMENT, HOWZABOUT DER WORLD'S FAIR OF '39-40?

FINE, TEMPUS. HAD A FRIEND WHO WENT THERE--SAID IT WAS... THE CAT'S MEOW.



AND I HAVEN'T SEEN SAN FRANCISCO IN A WHILE NOW...

THEN GOLDEN MELD, HERE VE VREEB.

DESTINATION UNHATCHED, SOON SCRAMBLED

NO, YOU MAY NOT TASTE MY TOMATOES.



INSTEAD, YOU CAN ANSWER A QUESTION.

WHY DOES ACE DO IT?

I MEAN, I KNOW IT MUST BE DONE, BUT WHY DOES HE DO IT?



VELL, MY VOLUPTUOUS
VIXEN, NO ONE ELSE
CAN DO IT.

YEAH, BUT WHAT GIVES
HIM THE DRIVE TO
TRY?

IT'S SUCH A
BIG TASK...

...A LOT
OF OTHERS
WOULD JUST
FOLD THE
CARDS.



PUT IT **THIS** WAY: WHEN READING
A BOOK, CAZA CORRECTS ALL
TYPES.

THE MARGINS OF
EVERY TITLE ON HIS
SHELVES ARE FILLED
WITH PROOFREADING
MARKS.

YEAH...
I NOTICED
IN A HAMMETT
BOOK--



WHEN **QUERIED** ABOUT
THIS, HE SAID HE DIDN'T
LIKE THINGS WHICH
WERE **WRONG**.

THEY OFFEND
HIM.

HE ALSO SAID HE
DID IT BECAUSE HE
COULD-- AND BE-
CAUSE **SOMEONE**
MUST DO IT, FOR
POSTERITY.



THIS PRESUPPOSES
ENORMOUS CONFIDENCE
AND LEVIATHAN EGO,
FOR IF CAZA DOES
NOT SUCCEED IN HIS
LARGER TASK--
EDITING PARADOX
OUT OF THE PAGES
OF **HISTORY**--

YEAH--THERE WON'T
BE ANY POSTERITY TO
APPRECIATE THE BLUENESS
OF HIS PICKY PENCIL.



AH! WE ARE HERE AND THEN, MY
SVELTE VESSEL OF--UH...

WHAT'S WRONG?

DES...UH...DESTINATION
ATTAINED... SUMMER, 1940, IN
...UM...NEW YORK CITY.

NEW YORK?!
BUT YOU SAID--



UH...I ONLY SAID DER **WORLD'S FAIR**,
LIEBCHEN...AND THERE WERE **TWO FAIRS**
IN 1939-40, THE **SMALLER** OF WHICH
WAS SAN FRANCISCO'S GOLDEN GATE
EXPOSITION, WHILE I PRESUMED YOU
WERE INTERESTED IN THE MORE
ELABORATE--

YOU PRESUMED NOTHING BUT A
LOT OF DAMNED **GALL**, HEAD!

YOU'RE
HIDING
SOMETHING!



YOU WERE AFRAID I'D **SEE**
SOMETHING? WHAT **WAS** IT,
HEAD? MY **DEATH**?

DID I **DIE**
RIGHT ABOUT NOW IN
SAN FRANCISCO?

WAS I
MURDERED?

IS **THAT** WHAT
YOU WERE
AFRAID I'D
SEE?

IT SIMPLY
WOULDN'T DO TO
HAVE **TWO** BRIDGET
KRONOPOLLOUSES
TRAIPSING AROUND
IN THE SAME --

ALL RIGHT, IF
YOU WON'T TELL
ME, I'LL JUST
HAVE TO FIND OUT
ON MY OWN.

BE AS FREUDIAN AS
YOU WANT, TEMPUS FUGIT,
BUT MEN AIN'T THE ONLY
ONES WHO CAN PLAY **HARD-
BOILED DICK**.

BRIDGET,
WAIT--!

SO I'M
"BRIDGET"
NOW, HUH?

NO LONGER YOUR **VIXEN**
OR **LIEBCHEN** OR **TOMATO**?

PLEASE, BRIDGET--
REMEMBER THAT YOUR
MISSION **MUST** BE
CONFINED TO THE
COLLECTION OF
SLUGS.

MAYBE A DEAD DAME AIN'T **INTERESTED**
IN YOUR SLIMY SLUGS. MAYBE I'M MORE IN-
TERESTED IN FINDING SOME ANSWERS TO--

BRIDGET, IF YOU'LL
SIMPLY OBTAIN ENOUGH
SLUSS, WE CAN USE
THEIR SLIME AS FUEL
TO REACH **TENOCH-
TITLAN 1518** --

--AND YOU CAN
ASK **ACE**.

CAZA WILL ANSWER
EVERY QUESTION THAT'S
BOTHERING YOU-- IT'S
SIMPLY **NOT MY PLACE**,
OR EVEN **TIME**.

ACE...

YES. AND BESIDES, I'D
ONLY BE **ANALYZING**--
SPECULATING-- FOR
THE MOST PART...

ALL RIGHT,
TEMPUS.

I MAY'VE BLOWN
A GASKET, BUT THE
ENGINE'S STILL COOL.

TENOCHTITLAN
IT IS...

... MEANING **SLUSS**
IT IS.

BOIT

ACH DU LIEBER --THANK
GOTT!

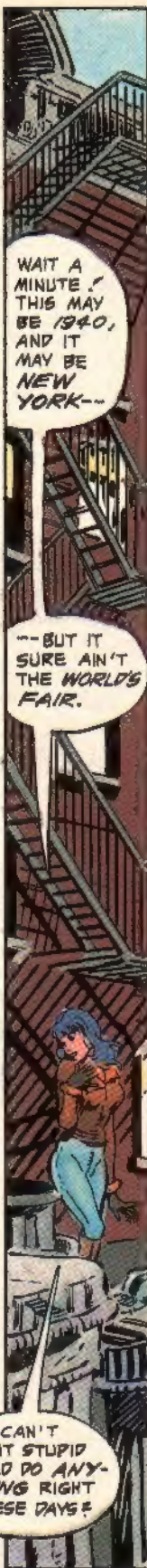


SHEEEEEEE...

STINKIN' LOUSY WOMB FACTOR.

DAMN GOOD THING THEY JUST COLLECTED THE TRASH, OR --

CAN'T THAT STUPID HEAD DO ANYTHING RIGHT THESE DAYS?



WAIT A MINUTE! THIS MAY BE 1940, AND IT MAY BE NEW YORK--

--BUT IT SURE AIN'T THE WORLD'S FAIR.



FIFTH AVENUE AND 23RD, HUH?

OH, WELL... AT LEAST A NEIGHBORHOOD LIKE THIS OUGHTTA BE RICHER IN SLUGS THAN THE WORLD'S FAIR.

HOOO-BOY!



BEAT THE CLOCK

SINCE BRIDGET AND HEAD HAVE NOT YET RETURNED TO TENOCHTITLAN, IT MEANS THEY'RE EITHER DEAD OR UNABLE TO RETURN WITHOUT MY AID... WHICH MEANS I MUST FIRST FIND THEM...

...BRINGING ME VICIOUSLY FULL-CIRCLE AGAIN.

THE MELD IS SIMPLY TOO BIG; EVEN WITH THE RESOURCES OF AN EBONATI SHIFT-VEHICLE, THERE'S NO WAY ANYONE COULD --



DAMN!

QUANN-- THE DARK BOYS' DOPPELGÄNGER FOR BENJAMIN FRANKLIN!

SOMEHOW HE FOUND BRIDGET-- TRACING HER ALL THE WAY TO MONTEZUMA CONTERMINOUS TO CAUSE THIS MESS IN THE FIRST PLACE!

OF COURSE-- UNTIL HER TEMPORALLY INDIGENOUS EXISTENCE IS TERMINATED, HER OUT-OF-TIME EXISTENCE CONSTITUTES A DOXIE PERTURBATION!



FROM THE MOMENT I ENGINEERED HER INCOMPLETE REMOVAL FROM NATIVE TIME, SHE'S BEEN EMANATING TIME RADIATION!

SHE'S BEEN LEAVING AN ENERGY-TRAIL -- SIMILAR TO THE ONE LEFT BY THE AZURE CROSSTIME EXPRESS WHEN IT RUNS ON IMPURE SLUG-SLIME.

FLUXENSOR WHEN, SIR?

QUANN WAS ABLE TO TRACK HER THROUGH TIME --THROUGH THE MELD...



...WITH THE USE OF A FLUXENSOR.

THANK THE TIME ORACLE MY POUND OF PIQUE DIDN'T DAMAGE IT...



... AND SAN FRANCISCO 1940, OPEN UP YOUR GOLDEN GATE, BECAUSE HERE I COME--TO PICK UP YOUR TRAIL, BRIDGET!

FROM THE CIRCULAR FILE: THE PERTURBED BENCHMARK BOOMERANG

BRIDGET WAS BOTH RIGHT AND WRONG IN HER SUSPICIONS.

SHE WILL BE MURDERED-- MUST BE-- BUT IT WILL SAFELY HAPPEN A FULL MONTH FROM THIS DATE.



YET HOW COULD I TELL HER THAT I DID PROGRAM OUR DESTINATION FOR SAN FRANCISCO--

--BUT THAT WE WERE SIDEREALLY SIDE-TRACKED BY THE CRISIS-BENCHMARK EFFECT?

ALL SHIFT-VEHICLES EMERGING FROM MELD IN THE VICINITY OF A SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL EVENT-- OR LOOMING PARADOX-- AUTO-MATICALLY GRAVITATE TO THAT POINT OF PERTURBATION.

THUS, SHE HAS ENTERED A TIME AND PLACE OF GRAVE CRISIS, YET SHE IS TOO INEXPERIENCED IN THE WAYS OF THE EBONATI--CHAOS AND VIOLENCE-- TO DEAL WITH IT.



LACKING CAZA AT HER SIDE, BETTER SHE DOES NOT KNOW AND THUS DOES NOT GET INVOLVED.

BETTER SHE SIMPLY FINDS SOME SLUGS AND WE DEPART, ALIVE AND WELL AND ABLE TO RETURN TO THIS MOMENT--IN FORCE-- SOME OTHER DAY.

END OF DICTATION.

HUGGING SLUGS

THAT ALL YOU WANT, LADY?



IF THESE ARE ALL THE SLUGS YOU'VE GOT, THEY'RE ALL I WANT.

JUST THE SORT OF THINGS I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO KEEP CLOSE TO MY HEART.

NOW FOR THE LONG WALK BACK TO--



WAIT A MINUTE...WHAT'S THAT ACROSS THE STREET--?

FACE IT,
SISTER-- IT'S
CALLED
TEMPTATION.

I COULD HOP
A TRAIN AND
BE HOME IN
SAN FRANCISCO
IN A FEW DAYS--
SNIFF OUT THE
DOPE ON ALL
THIS BUGABOO
MYSTERY-- HOP
THE RAILS
BACK HERE TO
N.Y.C.--

PENNSYLVANIA
STATION



-- AND VREEB TO
TENOCITILAN
WITH A SNOOTFUL
OF ANSWERS
INSTEAD OF
QUESTIONS...

HEAD'D BE
LAYING EGGS
OUT OF HIS
NECK-HOLE BY
THE TIME I GOT
BACK... BUT
WITHOUT THIS
SLUG-SLIME
FUEL, HE'D
HAVE TO
WAIT FOR
ME.

AND ONCE WE
DID BLAST OFF
IN THE **A.C.E.**,
WE COULD GO
TO ANY
MOMENT WE
WANT--



-- SO IT'D
BE LIKE MY
DETOUR TOOK
NO TIME
AT ALL.

WHAT THE
HELL?

**SENSE HER
WHEN, SIR?**



NOW TO GO
TO THE
ANTIQUE
SHOP ON
GEARY
STREET,
PICK UP HER
"SCENT"
AND --



**THIS
ISN'T SAN
FRANCISCO!**

SOME STRANGE
PEOPLE HERE TODAY,
AREN'T THERE,
DEAR?

AT FIRST I THOUGHT I'D BEEN SCRAMBLE-SHOT TO ONE OF THE ONIONSKIN LAYERS OF FIVE-WORLDS, WHAT WITH THE INCONGRUOUS MIX OF DIFFERENT NATIONS, BUT THAT QUICKLY COULDN'T BE...

THEN I REALIZED IT MUST BE THE BOOMERANG EFFECT, MEANING SOMETHING BIG WAS ABOUT TO UNFOLD, AND THE ONLY THING IN HISTORY WAS THE IMPENDING WORLD WAR...

...WHOSE RECORDS SHOWED NO SIGNIFICANT EVENT OCCURRING IN A SETTING LIKE THIS, SO IT HAD TO BE THE EBONATI CONTRIVING SOME PARADOX GAMBIT HERE, STILL LEAVING THE BIG QUESTION: WHERE WAS HERE?

GUMMING THE CHEW-CHEW

FRESH SUPPLIES OF JUICY FRUIT AT LAST. THIS ALL YOU GOT, MAC?

ALL RIGHT -- HOW MUCH FOR THE LOT, THEN?

TICKETS BAGGAGE

FOR THIS WEEK IT IS.

OH HELL, I JUST REALIZED-- I DON'T HAVE ANY COINS OF THE RIGHT VINTAGE... SPENT MY LAST DIME ON THE SLUGS...

...AND THAT MEANS I'LL HAVE TO STOWAWAY ON THE TRAIN AND--

HUH?!



RINALDO--!
BUT IT CAN'T BE--!



HEY, MAC--THIS TRACK RIGHT HERE--NUMBER 23--IS THAT THE TRAIN FROM SAN FRANCISCO?

YEAH, BUT THE GJM COMES IN ON A TRUCK FROM JERSEY...



HEY, YOU DON'T WANT EVEN ONE O' THESE FRUITY JUICES--?

AND HOW DID I EVER FALL FOR A SLIMY CHUMP LIKE HIM IN THE FIRST PLACE?



MUST'VE BEEN "WOMEN'S INTUITION" WITH A BRAIN TUMOR...

IT'S FISHY, ALL RIGHT--HE KNOWS EXACTLY WHERE HE'S GOING, AND SINCE ONE OF THE THINGS I'M CONVINCED ACE IS HIDING FROM ME IS THAT RINALDO IS ONE OF THE EBONATI...



... AND SINCE HE'S THE ONLY ONE IN MY NATIVE TUNE WITH A MOTIVE FOR KILLING ME, AFTER I SCAMMED HIM IN CAGOTS WITH ACE--



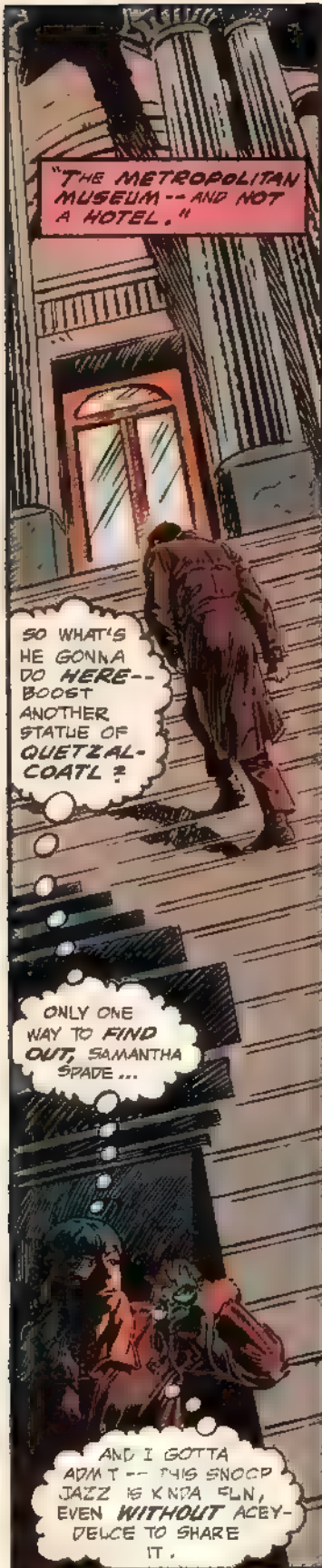
SPIT AN' SHINOLA, WHAT IF I'M FATED BY TIME TO BE MURDERED HERE AND NOW -- IN NEW YORK INSTEAD OF SAN FRANCISCO? SOMETHING MADE ME GO INTO THAT TRAIN STATION, AFTER I'D ALREADY DECIDED NOT TO SNOOP.

I COULD JUST WALK AWAY--GO BACK TO THE A.C.E. STUCK INSIDE THAT TRASH CAN AND TAKE OFF WITH HEAD AND FOIL FATE AND...



NAH...

I GOTTA KNOW WHAT RINALDO'S UP TO, THE LOUSY BUM.



"THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM-- AND NOT A HOTEL."

SO WHAT'S HE GONNA DO HERE-- BOOST ANOTHER STATUE OF QUETZAL-COATL?

ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT, SAMANTHA SPADE...

AND I GOTTA ADMIT-- THIS SNOOP JAZZ IS KINDA FLN, EVEN WITHOUT ACEY-DELCE TO SHARE IT.



HUSH MY MOUTH-- MEXICAN ARTIFACTS.

FIGURES-- BUT I'M GETTING FED UP WITH ALL THIS SO-CALLED "SYNCHRONICITY."



A DAME!

THAT WORM! THAT SLUG! HOOKED UP WITH ANOTHER TWIST ALREADY!

AND AIN'T SHE THE FASHION PLATE?



TWENTY-THREE SKIDOO.

RINALDO-- CODE-NAME RED-GAUNT.

THEY'VE COME UP WITH A TACHYON SLUG, ALTHOUGH THEY PARADOXICALLY DESCRIBE IT AS AN ACID WHICH IS CORROSIVE TO THE 4TH DIMENSION...

THIS ONE'S BIG, RED-GAUNT. THE THIRD REICH CITY-SHIP HAS SOME VERY DEDICATED DABLERS IN THE LABS.



IT BURNS HOLES THROUGH TIME.

THEN THEY'VE BECOME ARCHITECTS OF THE FINAL SOLUTION.

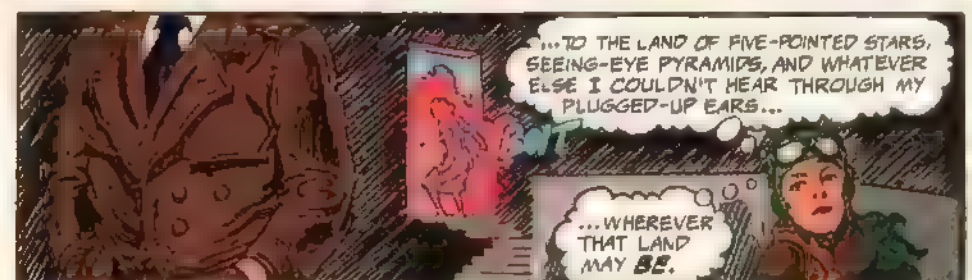
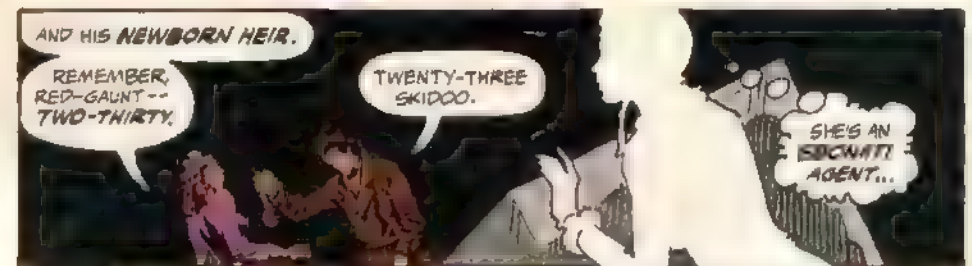


THE ERADICATION OF THIS TIME-STREAM ONCE AND FOR ALL, ACHIEVED VIA SCRAMBLED AND COLLIDING ERAS.



PRECISELY, RED-GAUNT.

A SWEETNESS TO SAVOR, IS IT NOT?



FLUXENSOR, WHENCE HER?

I'D FIGURED OUT I WAS AT THE 1939-40 WORLD'S FAIR IN FLUSH V6, QUEENS, NEW YORK--BUT I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY THE SCOOBERANG EFFECT HAD SHUNTED ME HERE OR WHY--

HUH?

SOMETHING ACTIVATED THE FLUXENSOR BRIDGET--IT MUST BE! SHE'S HERE--AND GETTING CLOSER! SHE AND HEAD CAME BACK TO THE TIME SHE KNOWS BEST--TO 1940!

AND HER PRESENCE AT A POINT OF EDDING PARADOX IS TOO MUCH COINCIDENCE FOR EVEN SYNCHRONICITY TO BEAR--WHICH MEANS SHE'S EITHER A CAPTIVE OF THE EDDING OR SHE'S TRYING TO PLAY HERO BY TRACKING THEM--BUT IF SHE WERE A CAPTIVE, SHE'D BE DEAD, SO SHE MUST BE HUNTING THEM, THE HEADSTRONG LITTLE FOOL!

I LOVE HER.

BUILDING TOMORROW'S WORLD

CLOSE CALL WITH THAT COP WHEN I HOPPED THE SUBWAY TURNSTILE...

"... BUT I'VE MANAGED TO FOLLOW RINALDO ALL THE WAY HERE TO-- WHERE ELSE?-- THE WORLD'S FAIR."

SHEESH-- THE PLACE IS LIKE A THREE-RING CIRCUS WITH 50 RINGS...

... BUT APPARENTLY OLD RINALDO'S GOT EYES FOR NOTHING BUT APOCALYPSE.

NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR 1940

SAY, MAC, WHO'S THE DAME ON THE WALL BY THE FIVE STARS?

WELL, THE THEME OF THE FAIR IS "BUILDING THE WORLD OF TOMORROW"--AND THAT FEMALE FIGURE REPRESENTS THE SPIRIT OF THE FAIR UNVEILING THE FUTURE.

GENE ELECTRIC BUILDING

GEE, THAT'S SWELL, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE RINALDO'S ALREADY CHECKIN' OUT LOCUS NUMBER TWO...

PARDON ME?

TOOTH-HURTY

ONE, TWO, THREE...

"YEP--HE WENT INSIDE THE G.E. BUILDING-- AND THERE HE IS BY THAT MURAL-- RIGHT UNDER A PYRAMID WITH AN EYE IN IT..."

... EIGHT, NINE, TEN...

"HE'S COMING BACK OUTSIDE, CC. N'T AS OFF AS HIS FACES..."

... TWENTY-ONE, TWENTY-TWO, TWENTY-THREE ...

"HE'S PICKED HIS SPOT, ALL RIGHT."



...TWO-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-FOUR, AND TWO-SEVENTY-FIVE.

BRINGING HIM TO THOSE TREES...



RIGHT... HERE...



... AND HE DOESN'T HAVE MUCH TIME -- MAYBE NONE OF US DO -- BECAUSE IT'S JUST ABOUT--



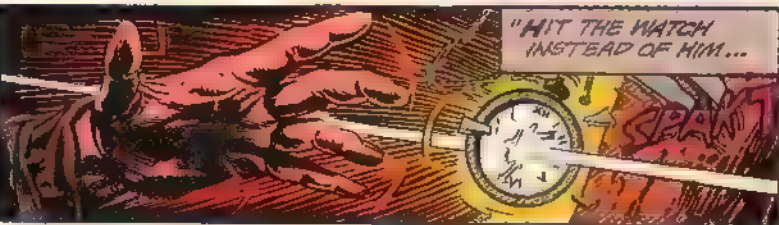
CHINESE DENTIST TIME

-- TWO-THIRTY.

NOW OR NEVER, BRIDGE...



OOPS--THIS PIECE FIRES A LITTLE HIGH AND WIDE...



"HIT THE WATCH INSTEAD OF HIM..."



"... WHICH MEANS I JUST PIERCED THE CYST AND MIXED THE TACHYON GLUE THIRTY MINUTES EARLY!!"

BRIDGET?!!

YOU FOOL?!!



MY...MY FACE...OH GOD, IT'S COMING OFF... BARING ME FOR WHAT I AM...

...REVERTING ME TO MY TRUE FORM OF RED-SAUNT?

YOU'VE THRUST US INTO A CRACK IN TIME, BRIDGET--INTO THE IMPOSSIBLE SPACE BETWEEN MOMENTS?

TALK ABOUT GLUTTONY

THE GATEWAY
HAS BEEN OPENED--
YOU'VE LOCKED US
IN LIMBO!

STATUE LIMITATIONS

"YOU'VE
MADE US
HYPER,
BRIDGET!
OUR
MOLECULES
ARE
VIBRATING
AT THE
SPEED OF
LIGHT--

uncle ernie's orange juice

"-- MAKING IT
PARADOXICALLY
SEEM LIKE WE'RE
TRAPPED IN A
TIME BETWEEN
TIMES."

uncle ernie's orange juice

"ALL NATIVE-
TIMERS
CONTINUE
AT A
NORMAL
SPEED
WHICH IS
FROZEN
FOR US--

"-- MEANING
WE WILL
EXPERIENCE THE
MALACLYPSE
FOREVER."

AWFUL
SORRY ABOUT
THAT,
RINALDO--

--BUT RIGHT
NOW I GOT
OTHER THINGS
TO WORRY
ABOUT...

... LIKE
THIS
BLACK
MOUTH
SPITTIN'
TIME-
ICONS
AT ME!

I GOTTA
QUIP WISE.

ONLY WAY TO
KEEP FROM GOING
INTO SHOCK...

... OR
MAYBE EVEN
CLUCKOO.

HOORBOY--BLACK STUFF
FLOWING FROM THE HOLE
IN THE WATCH--FORMING
SOME KIND OF MOUTH?
AND I THOUGHT I WAS
FBD UP AT THE MUSEUM!



EVERYTHING OLD TURNS NEW AGAIN

ERAS COLLIDE, BRIDGET!
TIME'S EFFLUVIA FLOODS
OUR SPACE!

WE ARE
DOOMED!

IF GLUE DON'T WORK, TACHYON

NO-- IT IS
NOT YET TOO
LATE! THUS FAR,
ONLY A SMALL
HOLE HAS OPENED
IN THE GATEWAY!

I CAN STILL STOP
IT--BY REMOVING THE WATCH
FROM THE LOCUS--BEFORE
TOO MUCH FLOODS THROUGH--

--BEFORE ERAS
TRULY COLLIDE!

I CAN STILL GET
MORE FUEL FROM THE
SHIFT-VEHICLE IN THE
PERISPHERE--

--CATALYZE
THE ACID
AGAIN--

--AND STATION
IT AT ONE OF THE
OTHER LOCI
GATEWAYS!

SO I'D BEST
REVERSE
TRACKS--

--AND MAKE FOR
THE SAFEST PLACE
AROUND--

--RIGHT UP
THERE
BEHIND
THESE
HORNS!

SO MANY
STATUES IN
MY PATH--

--BUT I CAN
STILL MAKE IT--

--I'VE STILL
GOT THE
TIME!

WHOA,
NELLIE!

IT'S HIM! HE'S THE
ONE WHO TORE YOU
AWAY FROM YOUR
HOMETIME!

BE MAD
AT HIM!

GO AFTER
RED-GAUNT!

DISMANTLING THE WORLD'S TOMORROW

AT FIRST I COULDN'T
UNDERSTAND WHAT
HAD HAPPENED TO
THE FAIRGOERS, WHY
THEY'D SUDDENLY
BEEN STOPPED TO
STATUES...BUT THEN
I REALIZED THAT
NOTHING HAD
HAPPENED TO THEM.

INSTEAD, SOMETHING
HAS HAPPENED TO ME,
AND TO ALL
OTHER
TIME-
ALIENS--

--MEANING
THE DARK BOYS
HAVE FINALLY
FOUND A KEY TO
OPEN ONE OF
THE WARPS--

--MEANING THE
WHOLE GAME MAY
ALREADY BE OVER,
LONG BEFORE I'VE
EVEN FOUND--

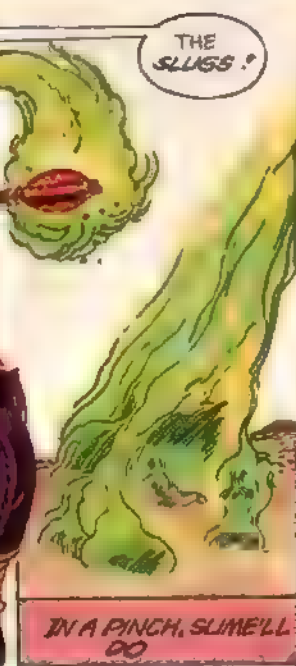
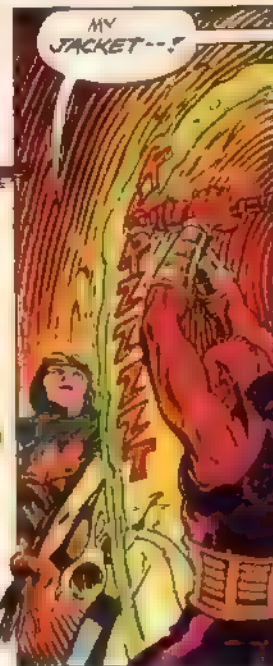
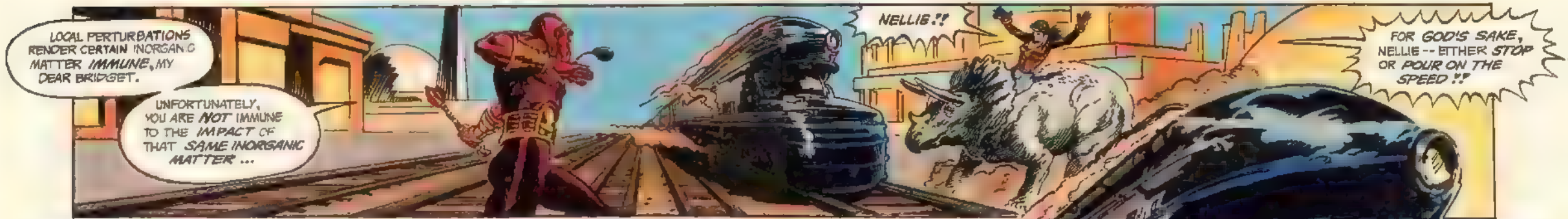
WHAT
THE--?!

BRIDGET!!

FASTER,
NELLIE!

GET HIM-- GET THE
NASTY RED BUGGER!

IF IT'S EVER
GONNA BE TIME
FOR YOU TO GO
HOME, WE NEED
THAT WATCH!



BACK IN SYNCH
AT LAST

TO HELL
WITH HER.

FINISH MY
MISSION...

... AND
SHE'LL BE
ELIMINATED
SOON
ENOUGH.

BRIDGET--?

GONE
AGAIN?

NOT
ENTIRELY.
YOU INCONSIDER-
ATE LUG.

BRIDGET?
WH-WHERE...?

NO TIME
NOW, AND YOU
DON'T HAVE TO
EXPLAIN--AFTER
SEEING THAT
NIGHTGAUNT AND
ALL THE FROZEN
PEOPLE, I'VE
FIGURED IT OUT.

BRIDGET,
SOMEWHERE IN
THIS CITY TONIGHT
A DARKSKINNED
WOMAN WILL SING
IN A VOICE AS DEEP
AND ROLLING AS A
CALM SEA.

...AND THE BAND
WILL BE SWEET
AND SLOW,
WANTING TO SLIP
INTO SLEEP IF
ONLY THE MUSIC
IN THEIR HANDS
WOULD LET THEM.

WITH A LOT OF
LUCK, AND IF YOU
AND I ARE VERY,
VERY GOOD...
WE'LL HEAR
IT, BRIDGET.

RIGHT
HERE--WITH
A FEW
HUNDRED
CHOICE
QUESTIONS,
ACBY-DEUCE...

YEAH? WELL,
I HAVEN'T
FIGURED OUT
WHY MY
REMOVAL FROM
1940--

SHE'LL
SING OF NIGHT
TRANS SLIDING
IN RHYTHM
UNDER A LARGE
CLOSE MOON...

SOMEWHERE
TONIGHT IN THIS
CITY WITH A LONG-
AGO PRICETAG OF
27 DOLLARS, THAT'S
HOW MAGIC WILL
SOUND.

THEN...
LET'S BE
GOOD,
ACE.

NOW BEFORE IT GETS TOO MUSHY AROUND HERE ...

... IT WAS HARD ENOUGH FINDING THAT SLUG THE FIRST TIME, AND IF IT GETS HIDDEN AT ONE OF THE LOCI MY PLUGGED EARS MISSED...

"WELL, LET'S JUST SAY IT'LL BE EASIER TO FIND THE GUY THAN THE SLUG."

YES... THIS LOCUS IS PERFECT...

PHALLIC FISHBOWL OF FOREVER

THE FACT THAT THE GOLDFISH, AS WELL AS THE WATER CONTAINING THEM, ARE ABLE TO MOVE --

-- SUGGESTS THE SLIME-FUEL CATALYST WILL NOT BE WATER SOLUBLE...

AND BY THE TIME THE SLUG EMERGES FROM THE WATCH AND CRAWLS ALL THE WAY UP THE INSIDE OF THE AQUALON--

--TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THE AIR--

-- I WILL HAVE LONG SINCE REACHED THE PERIPHERY...

...AND WILL BE SAFELY CRUISING THE MELD ON MY WAY TO--

BRIDGET--?!

AND CAZA??

JM...BY THE WAY, ACE, THIS "NIGHTGAUNT," AS YOU CALLED HIM, IS REALLY RED-GAUNT...

...AND RED-GAUNT IS REALLY RINALDO.

WAS RINALDO.

YES, I KNOW.

PRESERVING
A NIGHT OF
SMOKY
SOUND

BRIDGET RAISES HER
GUN--

--RIGHT INTO THE SWEEP OF
HIS DARKROD.

THE METAL
MELTS IN
A FLARE
OF NEG-
ENERGY.

YOU KNOW, CAZA,
I'VE NEVER FORGIVEN
YOU FOR THE NAPOLEON
GAMBIT...

...OR FOR THAT
TIME IN LAUSANNE
AND THE GULF OF
LIONS...

NOR HAVE I FORGIVEN YOU, RED-
GAUNT--OR ANY OF KROK'S OTHER
RUNNING DOGS--

--FOR
REPEATEDLY
FORCING ME TO
LEAVE THE
JUKEBOX--

--BEFORE
MY TUNES ARE
PLAYED
OUT.

SO IT LOOKS LIKE
WE'VE BOTH GOT SOME
HEAVY AXES TO GRIND.
WHAT SHALL WE DO
ABOUT IT?

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT HIM,
BUT THE DARKROD BLISTERS
MY FACE; WHATEVER I DO,
IT'LL HAVE TO BE FAST--

--BEFORE
OUR
COMPLEXIONS
MATCH.

FIESTA
WHERE?

PKASH

WHAT
THE--?

A STACK OF
FIESTA WARE--FROM
THE HOME FURNISHINGS
BUILDING OVER THERE--
A CRYIN' SHAME, BUT THE
ONLY THING I COULD FIND
ON SUCH A TIGHT
DEADLINE.

AT LEAST
THEY DID THE
JOB...

INDEED... BUT
NOW: BRIDGET--
WHERE'S THE
SLUG?

NELLIE!

WELL,
ACE... AT
LEAST YOU
SAVED MY
LIFE FOR A
LITTLE
WHILE...

BECAUSE
TIME DEMANDS
THAT ONLY I
TAKE IT.

TAKE
WHAT?

YOUR
LIFE--IF
I HAVE
THE TIME.

"THERE ARE MOMENTS WHEN YOU CAN SEE THE WORLD TURNING FROM
WHAT IT IS TO WHAT IT WILL BE. THE NEW YORK
WORLD'S FAIR IS SUCH A MOMENT, A COMPASS
ROSE POINTING IN ALL DIRECTIONS--TO
IMAGINARY FUTURE AND REAL PAST, FALSE
FUTURE AND IMMUTABLE PRESENT--THE WORLD
OF TOMORROW CONTAINED IN A LOST YESTERDAY."

--JOHN CROWLEY

"MAY YOU LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES."--ANCIENT CHINESE CURSE



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STINGING BACK

We interrupt these Vreebs, before they even begin to emphatically stress that Don Thompson is a cranky poop so fixated on *Doctor Who* that he can't even conceive of the possibility that anyone (namely me/ Doug) had never watched so much as a single episode of same until after scripting *AZTEC ACE* no. 3 and plotting no. 4. And in the episodes I saw (a three-parter stuck together in one 90-minute slot by PBS), the Doctor spent all his time, without once traveling through it, aboard a *space ship*. Furthermore, Dave "Doctor Who" Gibbons, illustrator of the Doctor's British comic book exploits and a very pleasant fellow who was kind enough to voice strong enthusiasm for *AZTEC ACE* when I recently met him up at the DC offices, says, "Nah! Tell Don Thompson that, aside from the names of their time machines both being acronyms, Who and Ace are not at all similar — and I ought to know." So there. And now back to our regularly scheduled Vreebs:

LITTLE FRITZIE VERY BIG

July 8, 1984, Thunder Moon 10 days old, the big face suggesting that of a classically beautiful woman.

The damndest thing happened. Your letter of March 25th came while I was away at the International Conference on the Fantastic at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, and somehow in dealing with the accumulated mail on my return, and after only glancing at *AZTEC ACE* and the fascinating Polanski article, it got put aside by me in a "Safe Place" where I would, never find it again.

Then yesterday while making a 3rd and super-intensive search for some notes on my next Fafhrd-and-Mouser story, I found in a shopping bag under my dinette table:

1. Those same notes (which weren't all that inspired).
2. The fairly detailed outline for "Thrice the Brindled Cat," sequel to "The Cat Hotel," published in *Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* Oct. 1983. (The FafMou notes were in the same file folder.)
2. Two science books I'd been sporadically hunting for several months.
4. My April Social Security check for \$836. (They're finally paying me something after I reached age 72 a year and a half ago.)

5. Your big envelope with its interesting enclosures! All of them things I'd been hunting or puzzling about. This is the sort of thing that manages to fool me, my memory, and my filing systems from time to time these days. Fiendish!

Perhaps I was spurred in my search because just three days ago I got a large stiffened envelope from my friend the artist Stephen Peregrine who illustrated the Donald Grant edition of my *BAZAAR OF THE BIZARRE*. I thought it was surely some art of his, so carefully was it packaged, but it turned out to be a glassine-wrapped copy of the same *AZTEC ACE* no. 1 and a letter from Stephen praising it and pointing out some of the synchronicities with my life and Change-War

stories that were hidden in it, as well as links with Robert Anton Wilson's *COSMIC TRIGGER* and the *ILLUMINATUS!* trilogy (the way the number 23 turned up, especially). For a bit I was super-confused. I even got the idea that Stephen had gotten into comics art and was the illustrator of *AZTEC ACE*.

But pretty soon I found my "Safe Hiding Place" and all, or almost all, became clear.

July 15, 1984

And now a week-long gap. Well, at least I sent you off a copy of *THE GHOST LIGHT*, on which there'd been a maddening delay in the extra bunch of copies I'd ordered. I got your copy off at least five days ago.

I caught and was naturally delighted by the San Francisco, Geary Street, and fog references in *AZTEC ACE*. The story is nicely drawn and colored, and goes at a whirlwind pace, while the Montezuma-Cortez confrontation and Franklin's conquest of lightning via the rod are both acute turning points in history. The dialogue is witty and I like the people, Bridget especially. Somehow every time-travel story becomes a tour-de-force, a roller coaster ride from start to finish, and yours reaches its end successfully, I'd say. Maybe it'll inspire me to get back to *BLOOD RITUAL*, a sequel to *THE BIG TIME* and "No Great Magic." I started last year before bogging down after four chapters and some 70 typed pages. (Fortunately, I hadn't really reached an impasse, I think, just got diverted.)

Love to Debbie and Derek

Fritz Leiber
565 Geary Street no. 604
San Francisco, CA 94102

For readers not yet in the know (and oh, how I envy those of you who take advantage of this unreserved recommendation), Fritz Leiber is quite simply The Best and his latest, *THE GHOST LIGHT* (from Berkley & Byron Preiss Visual Pubs), is surely the book of the year. From the opening brand-new title novella through eight of his best short stories (classics all) and all the way to the closing section's large chunk of fascinating autobiography, every page is a joy demanding to be savored slowly and lovingly. And I guarantee the book will send you scurrying in search of other bits and pieces of Fritz's oeuvre — an astonishingly rich one, ranging from the "pure" science fiction of *THE BIG TIME* (time travel) and *THE WANDERER* (the daddy of all "disaster" novels) to the supernatural chills of *CONJURE WIFE* (filmed as *BURN, WITCH, BURN!*) and *OUR LADY OF DARKNESS* (wow!) to the elegant yet rousing fantasy of the Fafhrd and Gray Mouser canon — for my money, the best sword & sorcery series ever penned, and yes, I *do* appreciate Howard's Conan and Moorcock's Elric, but Faf and the Mouse rise *above* the genre. (Fritz himself, by the way, is modestly mortified whenever I blurt something like this, deeply respectful of Howard's achievements as he is. . .)

Please: do yourself a favor and discover the delights of Leiber.

NRA A.K.A NRA

I have been following Eclipse's line since its beginning and have, for the most part, enjoyed what I've read. But this is not a critique of your titles.

On the covers of **AZTEC ACE** there have been NRA symbols. Not only do I find it appalling that an art form be corrupted by politics, but being a staunch anti-gun supporter, I cringe at your choice of affiliation. I have stopped purchasing your comics and await a satisfactory explanation. I realize that a one-person boycott will not have much financial effect on you, but I hope you understand the principle which prevents me from continuing with your publications.

G. F. Belard
1726 Jackson Street
Hollywood, FL 33020

Whoa! You got us very wrong, G.F. The NRA symbol on the covers of **AZTEC ACE** does *not* stand for the National Rifle Association. The Blue Eagle, and the motto "We Do Our Part" are, instead, the symbol of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's *National Recovery Administration*, initiated to give the economy a boost and provide additional jobs for those hard-hit by the Great Depression — via the indirect route of regulating wages and working hours. The NRA was the first piece of legislation to establish the concepts of a *minimum wage* and a *five day (40 hour) work week*, things we now take for granted. Universally known in the 1930s, when it appeared on advertisements (and all magazines published by companies which adhered to the guidelines it set forth), the symbol is now admittedly less recognizable, but we thought it was nevertheless familiar enough to use as a joke in a time travel book like **AZTEC ACE**. (Cat, who collects old magazines from the 30s and whose idea it was, is fond of telling people that **AZTEC ACE** is being printed in late 1933 and "drop-shipped to 1984.") The giggle, however, is apparently on us. Hope you will now resume reading **AZTEC ACE** and other Eclipse titles, G.F.

PART TWO

Recently you sent me a letter to correct my misconception about the NRA symbol on the covers of **AZTEC ACE**. Well, in my usual bass-ackwards manner, deepest apologies. I had something of a run-in with the local chapter of the National Rifle Association and the initials simply cause me to break out in hives. Mr. Moench, I have great respect for you as a writer. Fortunate enough to be good friends with a friend of Mike Zeck, I've managed to get my hands on a couple of your original manuscripts for *Master of Kung Fu*. Great stuff! I've also been enjoying your recent work, particularly **AZTEC ACE** and *Six From Sirius*.

G. F. Belard

IRONED PINE

Wow! That's all I can say about **AZTEC ACE**; it's much more than I expected. The accuracy of the Aztec sequences alone makes this book a real treat, and the fact that it's written by Doug Moench makes it a must buy.

I've been wondering for some time now: how do you pronounce Cat's last name?

George A. Williams
Rt. 2 Box 217
Angie, LA 70426

Editor Catrinka's singular surname is pronounced "ironwood," as in mined lumber.

ELOQUENT OWL

This month, July, marks my tenth year of buying comics, and so I'm indulging myself in a bit of nostalgia with the LOCs I've been writing. For you, Doug, it's a little tougher, for I was never exactly a *Master of Kung Fu* fan — oh, quit gasping in horror and let me explain! One of the first comics I ever bought was **MOKF** no. 21 — not because of

its hilarious "pajama-boy" cover copy, obviously — and I really enjoyed it, as well as the few others I then bought, but they were ultimately a bit too much for my feeble ten-year-old mind to fully embrace. Lately I've been making a more intent search for excellence — when you turn twenty it's harder to get excited by every costumed cut-up who comes along — and so I've been buying **MOKF** back issues. It'll probably take years to read them all, but I do deserve some points for trying, I think.

Yet **AZTEC ACE** is nostalgic for me, even though it's a new comic, and the nostalgia has nothing to do with any silly time travel joke I could make. Marvel Comics of 1974 was a pretty nifty place, filled by people who had been excited by Marvel's explosion of the 60s and wanted to further it. Mainstays like *Spider-Man* and the *FF* may have suffered, but the new concepts and approaches brought to titles like *War of the Worlds*, *Jungle Action*, *Man-Thing*, and **MOKF** (and later, *Howard the Duck* and *Warlock*) were truly exciting. One felt comics would just keep exploding, getting better all the time. The letter pages were filled with challenging, thought-provoking commentary, a bit pretentious at times but excusable because the letterhacks were genuinely enthralled — people like Bob Rodi, Brian Eral Brown, Peter Sanderson, and some guy named Mullaney. I would read these letters and wish I could write as well, hoping comics would always inspire such fervor.

Well, they didn't. The explosion imploded; most of the better creators left comics; and letters pages became filled with vapid praise from fans who can't remember or never knew. But now the dry years seem past at last, and those same creators are returning with wild concepts even as new people of talent swell their ranks. **AZTEC ACE** is a product of this renewed enthusiasm, and on its letters pages we find equations of truth and references to the Grateful Dead and even a letter by me, fashioning my own A.C.E. from the rubble of 1974's broken promises, jumping forward ten years to mail my own occasionally-precious thoughts to one of comics' survivors.

I could call this the summer of 74/84, and though it might be fitting to this title's concept, 1984 does more than pick up where that other time left off. *You own AZTEC ACE*. In so many ways, the heat is off. You don't have to explain everything for the ten-year-olds who can't see past the fight scenes; you don't have to keep veering back to safe, easily-promotable stories, and you don't have to worry about pressure from Higher Up to turn the Ace into a ninja or a toy robot if not a teenage superhero. Some constraints remain, of course, but they are imposed by the story form itself rather than by someone else's conception of that story form. Because of this, there isn't the feeling that in six months there'll be one of those infamous little yellow boxes telling us that Part II of the story will not be presented because of cancellation, a fear (usually fulfilled) we all felt during those earlier years.

So here's to the summers of 74 and 84, distinct yet intertwined — a paradox Ace would love — and here's to creators and creator's rights — and to Don McGregor, Steve Gerber and Englehart, and most of all (in this context at least) Doug Moench and **AZTEC ACE** no. 1, 2, 3... and hopefully no. 235, one of these days, still as bright and clear and sparkling as in its beginning. Don't wind down on me, boy; you've made me feel good about comics again.

David Allen
5 Douglas Drive
Olney, IL 62450

Why can I never devise an appropriate reply to you, David? Ah well; once again I'll fall back on Bridget's old reliable, the ultimately eloquent: "Hooooo..."

NEXT ISSUE. Luddites and One-Worlders pause for a preprandial drink before teaming up to oppose the chauvinistic technological progress of doom. Where does the Ace stand in all of this? Be here (as he turns history into palimpsests and pentiments) to find out. (Hint: it's somewhere on his feet.)

Then again, and more seriously, next issue is a: **TIME-BOMB!**

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TO BLINK, HE CRASHED EVERY
MOMENT OF INFINITY, MAKING
THE PAST SAFE FROM THE FUTURE.

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